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inclined to attribute this marked variation in shade almost wholly to the sharp contrast between the excessive whiteness of the cap and the much less brilliant surface of the planet.

If this dark shading is simply a matter of contrast, no additional conditions are required to account for the observed phenomena of the north polar region regarded as a water area; the gradual melting of an ice cap covered with snow would offer a satisfactory explanation. At the south pole it would be a land area covered with snow.

An interpretation of my own observations and drawings, whatever their real value may be, leads to conclusions which are not compatible with the hypothesis that the darker irregularly-shaded markings correspond to water areas, and the uniformly bright portions to land areas. Such would in part be the case if *Mars* possessed no light-dispersing atmosphere; but the observed increase in brightness from the center of the disk to the circumference with an accompanying loss of surface detail, alone almost completely demonstrates the presence of an atmosphere highly charged with matter capable of reflecting the Sun's light. Such an envelope about *Mars* would of course tend to diminish the brightness of the land surfaces, and to very much increase the brilliancy of the water surface.

It seems to me that if the presence of such an atmosphere is taken for granted, the land and water-markings heretofore assigned must be interchanged. J. M. SCHAEBERLE.

LICK OBSERVATORY, August 20, 1893.

EXPERIMENTS IN PHOTOGRAPHING THE CORONA.

We learn from a short note in *Astronomy and Astro-Physics* for August that Professor HALE, of Chicago University, recently attempted, from a station on Pike's Peak, to photograph the solar corona *without an eclipse.* This is a problem which HUGGINS, HALE and DESLANDRES have attacked in various ways, with considerable expectation of success. Professor HALE does not regard the observations with his "coronograph" as at all successful, possibly owing to the fact that the atmospheric conditions on Pike's Peak were surprisingly poor. We trust the various methods suggested will soon be put to the final test under perfect conditions. W. W. C.